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The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

No. 265. AUGUST, 1929.

TRUTH — LIBERTY — RELIGION.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God"—Romans 8 : 14.

Editorial.

Our Church Organisation.

There is a growing feeling among many of our prominent ministers and laymen that our Church organisation is badly in need of a thorough overhauling. This is putting the matter very mildly. In private conversation one often hears our methods of Church government soundly condemned and perhaps now that some of the milder criticisms have found their way into print (see the Rev. J. Begg's letter in this issue) the whole matter will receive the publicity that must necessarily precede all drastic reforms.

The belief is held by not a few of our ministers and lay men that the time has come for the whole organisation (should not one say the numerous organisations ?) to be scrapped and a **new organisation,** not a **new group of organisations,** formed to carry on the work.

Our Presbyteries with their different Moderators and Clerks, with their different minute books recording the different meetings of different groups of ministers and laymen at different times, our different Associations, Leagues and organisations, all these are seen to be ridiculous in the extreme when one considers the one comparatively small Church to which they all minister.

It is organisation gone mad. We are not running our organisation as many of us fondly imagine ; our organisation is running us and it is not even running us altogether as a team. We are being run in different directions to different places at different times with the resulting ruinous waste of time of those who have to do the running.

Scrap The Lot.

There are almost as many organisations in the Church as there are congregations. it is nothing short of pathetic to see these tradition-ridden organisations calling different groups of our workers to Belfast on different occasions to deal with the affairs of our one small Church. The waste of time involved in travelling, deliberating, writing and reading of minutes, discussing sectionally matters that should be discussed by the whole Church, deciding whether a certain small group has power to deal with a certain matter and so on,—the waste of time involved in this needless multiplicity of meetings is criminal. Why not scrap the lot ? Follow the lead given by all progressive bodies in this age of amalgamation. Why not make one organisation, one central body, one controlling power to deal with the affairs of our one Church ? Bring all our workers together, ministerial and lay, at the same times to discuss the same matters relating to the same household of faith.

Scrap all the various funds and discharge the committees. Make one central fund administered by one central committee conversant with the needs of each single church and each individual minister.

Legal and Constitutional Difficulties.

There are of course, numerous legal and constitutional difficulties in the way of amalgamation and unification but these difficulties are not peculiar to Ireland. They are to be found wherever the question of amalgamation is raised. They were found in England in the trust deeds of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and of the National Conference but they did not prevent the formation of The General Assembly. They were found in connection

with "The Unitarian Herald," "The Christian Life" and "The Inquirer" but they did not prevent the merging of the three into one denominational paper. They will be found of course in the trust deeds of most of our organisations and funds but must they necessarily blind us to our demonstrably inefficient and wasteful methods of Church government and to the desirability (one almost says the necessity) of forming a completely new governing body?

Drastic Changes.

We would remind those ultra-conservative members of our Church who regard the proposed changes as too drastic, that all changes along the path of progress must necessarily be drastic. The change made by Jesus was very drastic, likewise that made by Luther. The changes from candle light to electric light, from the stage coach to the steam engine, from the hand loom to the power loom, were all drastic. Similarly the change from our present many small antiquated organisations to one large progressive governing body will certainly be drastic but it will just as certainly be beneficial.

The Alternative.

Of course if we admire the existence of a number of presbyteries with a number of moderators, clerks and minute books, where one organisation with two officials and one minute book would do the work not only equally well, but better; if we think it beneficial to have our ministers and laymen wasting time attending superfluous meetings; if we think it good to have our officials working in small groups in holes and corners instead of joining forces and working together in one common organisation for the benefit of the whole Church,—if these things have our approval then by all means let us keep our antiquated and redundant collection of organisations. However, if we want to rid the ship of barnacles, clear the deck for action and fight the battle of Liberal religion; trusting in one God, burning with one purpose and encouraged by one hope, then we must work in and through and on behalf of, **one common organisation.**

The time has come, not only to place some of our statements of belief in a theological museum, but to place some of our hole and corner organisations on the antediluvian scrap heap.

Ullin and The Trinity.

On another page will be found notes from a sermon preached by the Rev. John Barron (better known to our readers as Ullin) on the subject of the Trinity.

Ullin's regular contributions to THE NON-SUBSCRIBER are always interesting, not to say occasionally controversial. His views on the Trinity will certainly not be accepted by many in our Church. Mr. Barron suggests that we should regard the Trinity as three manifestations of God. Sabellius suggested the same thing seventeen centuries ago when he maintained that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were but three different phases of the One Divine Being. The answer to such an argument is obvious. Why fix the number of God's manifestations at three? Why not fix the number at one million and three? Surely the second number would be nearer the truth seeing that in this marvellous universe everything from a tiny flower up to the mightiest of the heavenly bodies is a manifestation of God? A man with eyes to see and a mind to understand will certainly not limit God to three manifestations. No, this attempt at compromise will not do. The issue is perfectly straight and clear and need not be clouded by a fog of symbols and illustrations. God is either an absolute Unity with millions of manifestations as Unitarians assert or a Trinity with three distinct manifestations as Trinitarians assert. Which is it? Compromise on this question is impossible. Ullin will find strict Unitarians always ready to be tolerant towards strict Trinitarians but never ready to compromise. Should we not leave it at that?

Dr. Annie Besant.

At the Ulster Hall on Thursday, 4th July, the eighty-two-year-old president of the Theosophical Society made many striking declarations which must have found an echo in the hearts of liberal Christians. It is heartening to find so many of our principles advocated by a religious leader outside our Church. Needless to say, we pause before following Dr. Besant through the various stages of reincaration, through the intermediate world and through the sleep called death into the "mind world" beyond. We lack the direct evidence on these matters that Mrs. Besant seems to possess. However we go all the way with her in the assertions that "The Biblical

conception of heaven with its streets of gold holds no attraction for the thoughtful cultured person of to-day" that "happiness is a condition corresponding to one's good thoughts, endeavours etc." and that "any idea of everlasting torture saps belief in God as a Father."

In her concluding remarks she expressed sentiments that are expressed every Sunday from hundreds of Unitarian pulpits. "There is hope for all children of men. Suffering does follow evil; happiness does follow good; and we must learn by experience, and thus at last reach Divine Perfection."

From Denial To Affirmation.

It was difficult to believe that Dr. Besant who at the Ulster Hall was earnestly and reverently testifying to spiritual realities, was at one time publicly preaching Atheism throughout England. It seemed incredible that this quiet inspiring woman was the same uncompromising atheist who was convicted with Charles Bradlaugh for publishing "blasphemous" literature. As in the case of other outstanding figures, mature consideration of the things of the spirit, has changed negation to affirmation. Dr. Besant, like Shelley, Wallace, Blatchford and Edison, to mention only a few, has lived to affirm many things she formerly denied. Such is the mysterious working of the Spirit. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and wither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The Prayer Book Again.

As predicted in these columns a few months ago, a new crisis has risen in the Anglican Church. The decisions reached by the recent Convocations of Canterbury and York must necessarily revive the question of the relationship of the Church and the State. The position in a nutshell, is this. The Church which, owing to its relationship with the State, must accept Parliament as its final authority, now permits the use of a Prayer Book which Parliament has stated must not be used. In other words the great majority of the bishops have decided that the Church shall proceed as though Parliament had sanctioned the New Prayer Book instead of rejecting it.

Evidently the bishops, though they are part of an organisation legally bound to the state, reserve to themselves the right to say whether they shall or shall not obey the laws of the state. Why the bishops should reserve to themselves this right, and refuse the same right to others, as they must do if they wish men and women to be upright, law-abiding citizens, is something the average man finds it extremely difficult to understand. The appeal to conscience in this case is not very convincing. A man in the dock charged with breaking the law will not evade punishment by explaining to the magistrate that his conscience allowed him no other course. Laws are made to be kept—by all and not by some. However the bishops are by no means out of the wood yet. There are indications that the present parliament will not look with the same leniency on the law-breaking bishops as did the last parliament. A Labour Government cannot easily be persuaded to turn a blind eye upon law-breaking in high places. We may even yet see a fierce struggle between Church and Parliament, leading possibly to Disestablishment and Disendowment.

Hard Words But True.

"Too many men ordained during and since the war, cloak ignorance and inefficiency beneath an extravagant sacerdotalism" declared Bishop Barnes in a recent Westminster Abbey sermon. Unfortunately this is only too true. It cannot be denied that some ministers and by no means only those ordained during and since the war, think that piety and sacerdotalism are effective substitutes for sound learning and culture in its best sense. Needless to say no discriminating man is deceived by such substitutions. He knows perfectly well that piety and sacerdotalism do not require many hours of thought and reading in the study.

Unfortunately the discriminating men and women form the minority of the church-going public, with the result that the minister who can hide his lack of sound learning under the cloak of sacerdotal symbols and pious phrases is often able to create an impression where a minister who scorns such aids, very often fails.

Unpalatable facts these, but true, as every right-thinking man knows.

Unitarianism?

"Christianity is not primarily a doctrine to be believed, or a law to be obeyed; it is a life to be lived..... Our formulas and

our creeds do not mean absolutely the same thing to us as they did to our fathers ; the words are unchanged, but their meaning alters . . . . Faith grows. If it begins, as it must begin, as an experience, it ends as an experience." In case our unsuspecting readers should think that this comes from Martineau or Carpenter we hasten to add that the quotation comes from a sermon by Dean Inge preached at St. Peter's Church, Bournemouth on June 29th. Another phrase is worth quoting. "Christianity is not a book religion, like Judaism and Mohammedanism. If our Lord had set out to found a book religion, He would surely have written or dictated the book himself."

Of course we are not permitted to call this Unitarianism. It is sound progressive orthodox teaching from one of the leading lights of the Anglican Church. However it would be interesting to know wherein this teaching differs from that which is given every Sunday from many Unitarian pulpits. Is the difference one of name only ? Needless to say we welcome the teaching no matter from what pulpit it comes but we find it difficult to understand why many "orthodox" leaders do not join the Church to which, intellectually, morally and spiritually they properly belong.

The next issue of "The Non-Subscriber" will not be ready until Saturday 7th Sept.

Telepathy.

Silence is golden, said Carlyle, and as some cynical person later observed, it took him thirty volumes to prove his point. Every now and then some Utopian thinker looks ahead to the glorious day when the human race will be telepathic, when everybody will be able to transmit thoughts without talking at all. Not in our time friends, and thank God for that. For unless by that time the brain is equipped with dials, so that you can turn off thought you don't want to hear and tune in on those that are more agreeable—or shut them all off, if you feel so inclined—the human race is likely to come to a sudden and violent end by general murder and suicide very shortly afterward.

"The World To-day."

From the Marquess of Halifax's "Advice to a Daughter."

Religion must be the chief object of your thoughts, since it would be a vain thing to direct your behaviour in the world, and forget that which you are to have towards Him who made it. You must take it into your mind, and from thence throw it into your heart, where you are to embrace it so close as never to lose the possession of it. But it is necessary to distinguish between the reality and the pretence.

Religion doth not consist in believing the legend of the nursery, where children with their milk are fed with the tales of witches, hobgoblins, prophecies, and miracles . . . . . Religion doth as little consist in loud answers and devout convulsions at church, or praying in an extraordinary manner. . . . . It is not true devotion to put on an angry zeal against those who may be of a differing persuasion. Partiality to ourselves makes us often mistake it for a duty to fall hard upon others in that case ; and being pushed on by self-conceit we strike without mercy, believing that the wounds we give are meritorious, and that we are fighting God Almighty's quarrel ; when the truth is we are only setting out ourselves.

Our devotion too often breaketh out into that shape which most agreeth with our particular temper. The cholerick grow into a hardened severity against all who dissent from them ; snatch at all the texts of Scripture that suit with their complexion ; and because God's wrath was sometimes kindled they conclude that anger is a divine virtue . . . . . The melancholy and the sullen are apt to place a great part of their religion in dejected or ill-humoured looks, putting on an unsociable face, and declaiming against the innocent entertainments of life with as much sharpness as they could bestow upon the greatest crimes . . . .

Nothing is so kind and so inviting as true and **unsophisticated** religion : Instead of imposing unnecessary burdens upon our nature, it easeth us of the greater weight of our passions and mistakes : Instead of subduing us with rigour it redeemeth us from the slavery we are in to ourselves, who are the most severe masters, whilst we are under the usurpation of our appetites let loose and not restrained.

Religion is a cheerful thing, so far from being at cuffs with good humour that it is inseparably united to it. Nothing unpleasant belongs to it.

Prayer for Spiritual Reality.

S. McComb.

My Father and my God, lead me and guide me on the dim and perilous path of life. Too long have I directed my own steps, too long have I lived without Thy wisdom stumbling in the darkbess because I did not love Thy light. But now I desire nothing, I need nothing but to know that Thou art in me and I am in Thee. Let the fire of Thy love consume the false shows wherewith my weaker self has deceived me. Make me real as thou art real. Inspire me with a passion for righteousness and likeness to the Man of Nazareth that I may love as He loved, and find my joy as He found His joy in being and doing good. Only when, like Him, I am perfectly united to Thee, shall my life be truly alive.

Dwell Thou within me to give me His courage, His tenderness, His simplicity, to transform my own poor shadow-self into the likeness of His truth and strength.

Amen.

Reading :—The Great Experiences in Life are those which God works in us.

J. Reid.

The great things God does for us are not the things which He does outside of us—His providential guidance, deliverance from danger and the like, the gifts that life is always bringing to us so wonderfully. The great things God does for us are done within us, in the effects of those experiences upon our natures. Do our experiences pass within to do the work which God's Spirit can enable them to do, leaving us when they have gone with some new grace of courage, some larger vision of God, some deeper sympathy with man, some surer mastery of life? Or do they only pass us by, recording in our memories the fact that they have come to us, just as a passing trifler would scrawl his name upon a wayside rock? The test of what we are getting out of life is its reactions on our souls. An old man once said to a youth setting out upon the road—"Remember life will either soften your heart, or it will harden it, or else it will break it." There is much truth in his discernment; and every kind of experience has this varied power. The question of life's success is not what we have made of it, but what it has made of us! What kind of men and women have we become in the contact with life? What kind of souls have we developed through the stress and strain? Are our natures being developed, our hearts being softened, our minds growing clearer about the great things, our spirits entering more deeply into the living peace of Christ? Is the vision of Christ growing finer and more radiant year by year, as the face of Beatrice became to Dante, the higher he ascended toward Paradise? . . . . These are two great experiences, the enduring experiences, beside which the things which merely touch our outward life are but debris, of no more real or lasting value than the trifles we bring back from a foreign tour to keep in our cupboards for mementoes of the past. The great things of life are the abiding influence wrought into our natures by the gracious discipline of God.

A Parable.

By Max Muller.

The gods, having stolen from man his divinity, met to discuss where they should hide it. One suggested that they should carry it to the other side of the world and bury it there; but it was pointed out that man was a wide wanderer, and might happen upon the lost treasure. So it was proposed to drop it into the depths of the sea; but again the objection was urged, —the insatiable curiosity of man might discover it as he dived into "the dark, unfathomed caves of ocean." After long silence, the oldest and wisest of the gods spoke, saying: "Hide it within man himself; that is the last place where he will think of finding it." So it was agreed. Through long ages, high and low, far and near, man wandered and sailed and explored and discovered, before it occurred to him to look into his own nature for the pearl of great price, the divinity of his own soul, by which he was to attain his destined place.

Isn't wireless wonderful? Think of the jazz bands, the speeches, the poetry, and the thousand and one things you can silence with one little turn of a dial.

—"Glasgow Eastern Standard."

The Religious Education of the Child.

By John G. Ballantyne.

"Easily the best thing of the recent Assembly Week" states the sender of "The Religious Education of the Child" by John G. Ballantyne (The Lindsey Press, price threepence) in a covering letter to the Editor of The Non-Subscriber. The slight exaggeration is pardonable. This pamphlet contains more value to the square inch, than many volumes on the same subject contain to the square yard. Those who heard this address to the General Assembly will be pleased to have it in print; those who missed it will be well advised to obtain a copy.

Mr. Ballantyne's qualifications for dealing with the problem of the religious education of the child are well known beyond the borders of Unitarianism. Therefore to say that this printed address is worthy of the author is to pay it a very high compliment. Above all else the author would have us realise the inestimable value and overwhelming significance of the child. "—— born out of the mother-past, with a new gift for to-day, and a promise for to-morrow; symbol of hope for the human race; the new creative centre; the new word of God," is the author's way of telling us "for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Even the most seasoned minister or Sunday School teacher will not ignore the warning that the chief task in religious education is "to reveal that divine nature to the child itself" and not to give him a "lesson" occasionally to "prove the existence of God." The advice to "encourage him to see, not the ingenious mechanism of the flowers, the mere distance and weight of the stars, but the depth and continuity of the design" will be appreciated by all interested in the imparting of religious instruction to the young. These quotations (others would have served the same purpose) show how reverently and with what deep insight Mr. Ballantyne has handled his precious subject. He evidently feels with Tagore that "every child comes with a message that God is not yet discouraged of Man" and judging by his brief but suggestive reference to the part mothers have to play in helping the religious teacher, also feels with the unknown Eastern writer that "God could not be everywhere so He made Mother."

The author's definition (he calls it a part definition) of a Sunday school is one of the best we have met. "This is the place where we guard the sacred fire—know about it, understand it, cherish its first flickerings; give the child just when he most needs it, faith in the in-dwelling spirit." This illuminating pamphlet should be in the hands, not only of ministers and Sunday school teachers, but of all who are interested in the moral and spiritual well-being of the young. No written account could do it justice. This relatively long review is out of all proportion to the small pamphlet. So is the value of the pamphlet out of all proportion to the price of threepence.

S. P. W.

Tolstoy.

Men may with their lips repeat certain words, but they cannot believe that which has not sense. One may say with one's lips: "I believe that the world was created six thousand years ago"; or, "I believe that Jesus flew away into the skies and is sitting on the right hand of the Father"; or "God is One, and also Three";—but no one can believe it, because the words have no sense. And therefore the men of our modern world who profess distorted Christianity, in reality believe nothing.

Sol Invictus.

In golden Monstrance of the Light
The Sun-Host blesses earth each morn,
And 'ere the daylight is withdrawn
The Blessed Sacrament of Light
With sunset glories hallows night.

The incense breath of flowers is poured,
A thousand birds in concert sweet
Heaven's Eucharist rejoicing greet
Morning and evening is adored
Light, Life and Love, One Holy Lord.

F. H. A.

But little do men perceive what Solitude is, and how far it extendeth. For a Crowd is not Company; and Faces are but a Gallery of Pictures; and Talk but a tinkling Cymbal; where there is no Love.—*Bacon*.

Friendship is to be purchased only by friendship. A man may have authority over others; but he can never have their heart but by giving his own.

—*Bishop Wilson*.

Letters to the Editor.

Letters to the Editor are welcomed. They should be written in good taste, as brief as possible and duly authenticated. No letter will be inserted without the writer's name.

Dear Sir,

At the conclusion of another General Synod of our Church I may be pardoned in taking this opportunity of making some reflections upon our Church organisation as a whole. In many respects, I suppose, we are as well organised as any other Church body, and in every respect as much ability is displayed and the spirit of harmony made manifest. But why do the wheels move so cumbrously? Wherein is the necessity for so many different meetings? It takes a full page of our printed minutes to tell ourselves and others who we are, and the curious anomaly exists of a body of religious people being known separately as the "Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians and other Free Christians," as the "Remonstrant Synod of Ulster," and as the "Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland." Historically, these organisations were created to meet the needs, necessities, and aspirations of the time, and there may or may not be faults or difficulties in the constitution of these organs. What I plead for is that some method might be found of making this existing trinity of bodies **one** body. In these days different sections of the Christian Church are coming together, realising the necessity for unity in organising their common work of proclaiming the gospel. What has been achieved by others in this respect, might surely be accomplished by us who should have less difficulty to overcome. There is dignity in the hope of a united Church, there is inspiration in the thought that our work should be one, our interests the common interests of all. And there can be no doubt about it that the work of our Church would itself gain in interest and gain in efficiency. It is noticeable, for example, in our meetings of Synod how sometimes the question arises as to whether the Synod has anything to do with some report from the Association, and such like hesitancy of procedure which does not add to the dignity of our courts. I therefore suggest that we might endeavour to simplify our work, unify our organisations, and draw closer together in our aspirations as a Christian community. J. BEGG.

(This matter is referred to in the Editorial).

"Curious" (Belfast)—The Ulster Hall service was arranged as a combined gathering of all the congregations of the Non-Subscribing Church. No good would be served by publishing your letter. Send your suggestions to the proper quarters where they will receive sympathetic consideration

Anonymous—Will the writer of the unsigned letter on the same subject (Ulster Hall Service) please send name for publication?

Religion and the Scientific Man.

"In his latest work, 'The Nature of the Physical World (p.350) Prof. Eddington states that it was in 1927 that it first became possible for a reasonable scientific man to accept religion. For it was in this year that Heisenberg, Bohr, Born and others demonstrated that there was a vacant place in natural physical processes in which the Divine Immanence could operate."

G. E. SUTCLIFFE.

Arnold Bennett's Indictment of Christianity.

Arnold Bennett, who for the last generation has gone out of his way to discredit Christianity, returns to the attack in a small recently published book entitled "The Religious Interregnum."

In his latest effort Bennett almost exhausts the vocabulary of denunciation. The defenders of the Christian faith are charged with "slander, libel, gross breaches of the common polite usages of debate and every expression of contempt and hatred." The Church as a whole is always ready in its own interests to "temporise," to "twist words," to "prevaricate" and to "commit every sort of intellectual dishonesty."

A Christian minister is "a white-tied authority on God, beset at times with a frightful fear that his pretentions are preposterous." With this and similar condemnatory language Arnold Bennett launches his latest attack on Christianity.

One wonders if Bennett had really taken the trouble to become well acquainted with modern Christian thought before sitting down to write his book. As an indictment of present-day Christianity, even the most

orthodox Christianity, the book is not worth taking seriously and will probably not be taken seriously in spite of the author's reputation. The criticisms apply to the Christianity of the Middle Ages and would never have been made if the author had been fully conversant with the trend of thought in the Church to-day.

If Mr. Bennett's opinions are to carry weight among present-day Christians he must at least show that he knows what present-day Christians really believe. He must not saddle the present Christian Church with medieval theology and then criticise present-day Christians for beliefs they do not hold and which they repudiate as whole-heartedly as he does himself.

However, though Bennett's indictment of Christianity will not be taken seriously (it is too full of misconceptions of present-day Christianity for one thing and too full of satire and venom for another) his sharp distinction between the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of the Church,—a distinction made all the sharper by his fierce condemnation of the latter,—is all for the good.

Bennett's opinion of Jesus is practically everybody's opinion of Jesus. "He remains to-day the greatest individuality in the annals of mankind. He is still loved by men as much as he is esteemed. And there is no sign of change in the human attitude towards Him."

The truth is that Bennett on his own showing is not anti-Christian but anti-Church, anti-dogma, anti-creed and anti-everything else that savours of ecclesiasticism and theological speculation. To parody Bernard Shaw's remark about Socialism and the Socialists, Bennett thinks that Christianity would be all right if it were not for the Christians.

He would have us all followers of Jesus and not followers of the Church, believing in Christ and not believing in the theological system known as Christianity. Who will dare to say he is wrong?

This of course is not the main theme of the book. The main theme is nothing less than a bitter, uncompromising, ill-judged indictment of Christianity and all connected with it, an indictment that is not justified because the writer has shown that he is not fully acquainted with what present-day Christians believe. However, out of the main theme comes this important distinction between the Christian Church and Jesus. Christianity is placed in the dock charged, wrongly in many cases, with every conceivable crime and Jesus is placed on the throne as the King of the human family. The first is destined to extinction, indeed it is as good as dead already. The second will live for ever.

If Arnold Bennett will take the trouble to converse freely with Quakers, Unitarians and Liberal Christians generally both inside and outside the orthodox Church, he will find that the majority of his criticisms of Christianity have been anticipated.

S. P. W.

Obituaries.

Burial.—April 27th at Papakura, by Rev. W. Jellie, Miss Bessie Pope Bradley, formerly of Arapohue, N. Wairoa. Through her father she had connections with an old Unitarian Church in Ravara, Co. Down; and through her mother (nee Kidd) connections with our Church in Newry and with Hope Street, Liverpool. Of strands like these are some of our threads of Unitarianism in New Zealand composed. Miss Bradley lived and worked through early pioneering days in Northern Wairoa, and a numerous gathering of relations and friends testified to the esteem in which she was held.

—From The Auckland Unitarian Church Calendar, June, 1929.

Mrs. W. E. Maginnis, Holywood.

Our Holywood congregation has lost an old friend by the death on June 15th, of Mrs. Maginnis, wife of Captain William Edward Maginnis, of Kinnegar. Mrs. Maginnis had been a member of the church for many years, and, although ill-health has for some time kept her from taking any active part in its worship and work, she maintained her interest in its welfare to the end. She was a capable business woman, and for many years acted as assistant to the Church treasurer. Of a genial and sociable nature, her bright smile and cheerful words will be missed by her many friends. She was the devoted wife of a devoted husband, and sincere sympathy is felt for Captain Maginnis in his bereavement. The respect and affection in which she was generally held was shown by the large attendance at her funeral. The services at the house and at the grave side, were conducted by the minister, Rev. Edgar Lockett.

Unitarian and Free Christians.

(Extracts from Trinity Sunday Sermon).
REV. JOHN BARRON.

"In the Church of Ireland as well as the Episcopal Churches of England and Scotland, to-day is called Trinity Sunday, and the teaching to which special attention is given, is the doctrine of the Trinity. That is also done in many Unitarian Churches to-day, and a very strong anti-Trinitarian attitude may be taken up.

Now, our Church in Ireland is simply a Presbyterian Church which does not subscribe to, or profess its belief in the Shorter Catechism and Confession of Faith, as the ministers and members of the General Assembly (Ireland) are supposed to do. But that is all, and its members are left free to have their own ideas. A Laymen's League has been formed which is called Unitarian *and* Free Christian Laymen's League; the Free Christian including those who are prepared to take a broad view of Christian doctrine, and even to put a liberal interpretation if need be on the doctrine of the Trinity. It is of no use speaking of narrowness and bigotry among those called "orthodox," while in another direction being equally narrow. The greatest Unitarian who ever lived perhaps was Dr. Martineau, and at one time he worked hard to bring about a better understanding between Unitarians and Trinitarians. Are those of our number to be condemned, who are prepared to accept Martineau's interpretation of the Trinity and prefer to call themselves "Liberal Christian" or "Free Christian?"

Two men enter into partnership, Brown and Jones. But supposing one of the partners Brown, to be of a more energetic type than the other man Jones, and insisted on just having his own name Brown painted on the sign above his shop and left off the other partner's name, what would be thought of it?

There has been an understanding made in England in a new Assembly of congregations, called "The Assembly of Unitarian *and* Free Christian Churches." As in the Unitarian and Free Christian Laymen's League, it is a partnership. But in the notices of the Laymen's League, "Free Christian" is sometmes dropped out of the title.

Likewise on some of the notice-boards in front of our Churches. Not content with the

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official title of the Church, "Non-Subscribing Presbyterian," the word "Unitarian" is added. Well, if you are going to put the word "Unitarian" on the notice-board, put "Free Christian" as well. Free Christian is not a sleeping partner in the firm, but has equal rights with the other partner.

The Church has had in it many severe storms and much that was against the spirit of Christ, because of quarrels concerning the Trinity. The confusion has risen in two ways, not understanding the word "person" and making the man Jesus Christ, identical with the Second Person.

If we are to understand the real meaning of the Trinity, we must in the first place consider it apart from Jesus, altogether, as our two texts of to-day, written centuries before Christ, do (Jeremiah X. 12; LI. 15:—"He hath made the earth by His *power*, He hath established the world by His *wisdom*, and hath stretched out the heavens by His *discretion—or understanding*")

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THE BOOK OF RUTH

Chapter 4, Verse 4.

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Then we begin to see our way more clearly. One of our ministers in London, the Rev. J. Tyssul Davis, who is minister of the Theistic Church, London, has, I understand a little ritual of his own. He lights a lamp which hangs over in front of him, just before he commences to preach his sermon, the one light being the symbol of the Unity of God.

I don't know how many glasses there are in the lamp, or whether it is a three-sided lamp with a glass on each side; but, if that were so it would be a correct symbol, of one in three and three in one, one light shining through three manifestations. That statement would not suit many theologians, who insist on "person" being taken in the ordinary sense, consequently it is considered unorthodox. But, the root-word is "persona" a mask worn by an actor, not to shine through, but to sound through.

Go further afield, than the borders of Christianity, and in almost all of the Great Religions, whatever the term used, a triplicity in manifestation is taught, call it Trimurti or Trinity."

These three great manifestations are seen in human life. In many towns are to be seen the Law Court, the Church and School, and the Masonic Temple, emblems of the three manifestations of Power, Wisdom, Understanding and Activity. The Law Court is the emblem of Power, of all that has to do with the administration of the state; the Church and School represents the Word and Wisdom aspect—religion and education—in all its departments; the Masonic Temple indicates the Activity aspect, all the work of life in which the Great Plan is carried out, in organised labour, in commerce, in trade, in agriculture, the expression of the Divine Energy, the Encourager, the Holy Breath or the Holy Ghost, as it is called.

"The Universe is built upon Music and Numbers" said Pythagoras. We know nowadays, how sound builds form. What lies at the root of the idea of the Trinity is God revealing Himself through His manifestations, and we would do well, on whatever line of work we may be, to think that we are in that work, manifesting an aspect of God. Following this line of thought, do we not perceive, how in the fullness of time the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth!"

False Gods.

THE RELATIVITY OF IDOLATRY.

By Rev. Leslie J. Belton, B.A., M.Sc.

Section I.

There is a story told of a Hindu officer, a man of some education and culture, who devoted considerable time every day to the worship of five round pebbles, which symbolised for him the all-pervading Deity he acknowledged but could not see. The daily ritual of this Hindu illustrates the inveterate and universal tendency of man to create for himself a visible and concrete representation of Divinity. Perhaps no commandment has been broken more consistently than the ancient commandment alleged to have been delivered to Moses on Mount Horeb, "Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them."

The children of Israel followed after other gods; they craved for a god they could see and touch. Their history shows how frequently they disobeyed the divine command. They were still children, and "childish things" they could not put away. Not all the denunciations of all the prophets could eradicate from them the tendency to make obeisance to idols of wood or stone. The stories of Bel and the Dragon in the Apocrypha, like the Epistle of Jeremiah, were written to prove how helpless the gods actually were. "The gods of the nations are idols; but the Lord made the heavens." (Psalm 96: 5). Neither denunciation nor argument could stamp out that which we now characterise as a universal tendency to concretise the object of thought or adoration. "They be not gods which are made with hands," yet everywhere men have cried aloud, "great is Diana of the Ephesians."

Rarely, and on the tide of reaction only, do religious people tear away from their worship the outward and visible symbology of the faith that is in them. Even our "puritan" meeting houses are symbolic of the faith of forefathers whose intense dread of that architectural elaboration so symbolic of Catholic ritual prompted them to worship the Lord in the beauty of simplicity and severity. On this count alone, the difference between Protestant and Catholic, or between Mohammedan and Hindu, consists not so much in the presence or absence, as in the quality and relative ornateness of ritual and symbology. We have all our "set ways of doing things." Even Quaker worship is ritual of a kind. We have our idols too, idols of stone or idols of thought.

Dr. Mellone has emphasised a truth that should be self evident that the "heathen in his blindness" does not "bow down to wood and stone" as wood and stone. The idol before which the "heathen" bows usually represents for him a reality that is invisible, inaudible, intangible; it has symbolic value. There is a fine passage in Merejkowski's "Death of the Gods," which points this truth; "For what imbeciles do you take us if you think that we worship the matter that represents our gods, metal, stone or wood. All your preachers preach this, but it is a lie. We worship not these things, but the soul, the living soul of beauty, in these models of the purest human beauty."

I am not concerned to offer a defence of idolatry. Idolatry is usually associated with priest craft, with gross superstitions, and, sometimes, with vile practices. But I am not at all sure that it is incapable of defence. For millions of people on this earth to-day idolatry, as we name it, has "pragmatic" value of a high order. Who are we to smash their idols? Is any one of us without sin? Have we no idols, no images of the mind? And is mental imagery so very far removed from material imagery? When I was a boy, some hot-headed Kensitites (inaptly styled Wycliffe preachers) entered early one morning an Anglican Church in a Sussex town and removed an image of the Madonna. My own early associations were Calvinistic and far removed from "high church practices," but I remember that even then I was shocked at this wanton display of intolerance. Those sacriligious preachers, whose sincerity was no excuse for bigotry, were guilty of mental idolatry, of slavery to a doctrine, as culpable in the light of reason as the idolatry of those whose church they desecrated. They were blind to the mote in their own eye.

Section II.

Few people can realise the idea of God without the aid of visual imagery. Men and women vary in their capacity to visualise, but few indeed can think of Him, "Who

dwelleth not in temples made with hands" or minds, except in terms of some mental configuration dependent upon imagery. Their representations may be conceived as material like the idols of modern Hinduism, they may be pictorial, as in Christian art, or they may be pictures in words. The Jews countenance no graven images, but no race has been more prolific in its verbal imagery. Though none might name the sacred name, Jewish literature contains numerous colourful descriptions of Him who is "clothed with majesty and honour." Some of the early Christians were even more pictorial in their verbal imagery, as witness the Christ of the Apocalypse "clothed with a garment down to the foot and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto burnished brass—and His voice as the voice of many waters—; and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength." (Revelation I: 14-16).

The Hindu who worshipped the all-pervading Deity through the medium of five rounded pebbles was surely less idolatrous, at least more worthily idolatrous, than the contemporary college student who answered Professor Leuba's questionnaire in the following manner: "I think of God as the perfect being, living somewhere in the distance, surrounded by the company of the blessed. He is all powerful but withal magnanimous. I think of Him as real, actual skin and blood and bones, something we shall see with our eyes some day, no matter what lives we had here on earth." Probably few statements are so honestly and so naively crude as this one is; yet is it not true that even our sublimest picturisations of God—the pen pictures of a John Bowring, a Rollo Russell or an Alfred Noyes—are but idols of the mind, attempts, to use Fosdick's vivid phrase, to "catch the sun at noon in our butterfly nets"?

We ascribe to God our human values. Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Holiness, Unity, all these we attribute to Him. Because to us personality is of supreme value we invest Him with personality. Maybe we can do no other. We picture Him as King; we name Him Father; we think of Him as Creator. All are images, symbols, vain attempts to name the nameless, to limit the illimitable. Perhaps Eckhart was right when he exclaimed, "Why prate of God, whatever thou sayest of Him is untrue?" Like little children, we think in concrete terms; we project into the infinite our poor dimensional pictures of Reality, our idols of the mind.

> "Our partial pictures of the whole,
> Our demi-gods from heaven hurled,
> Our idols in their chapel nooks,
> Our gods of stone or wood—or books—.
>
> Forgive them all! We are but men,
> Our thoughts must go a homely road,
> We build as children in their play
> Our frail theologies of clay."
>
> (PRESTON SLOSSON.)

Section III.

The true mystic is always aware of the difficulty of interpreting in finite terms his experience of Spiritual Reality. The experience is so gloriously real, so trancendent over time; the interpretation of the experience is so painfully inadequate. Somehow, that which is timeless must be expressed in terms of time and space; reality must be symbolised as best may be in music, painting, prose or poem. The symbol has value in so far as it represents the reality symbolised. The symbol loses its true value, its representation of ultimacy, just as soon as it becomes an end in itself (as frequently it does) and fails to awaken in the minds of its beholders that for which it stands. When the symbol is revered for its own sake, and not for its representative value, it has become an "idol." The trouble is that we perpetuate our symbols long after they have ceased to be of real use. The world is lumbered with idols, material and mental. Antiquated thought forms lie strewn along the highway of life. Yet we do well to tread warily and to be not over hasty in sweeping them away. That which to us is a mere idol, may be to others a precious symbol.

The tourist in Benares is appalled at the evidence on every side of crass superstition. He notes the native's faith in the power of the Ganges water to purge him from evil, and his strange reverence for the sacred cow. From the rationalistic standpoint we evaluate these practices for what they are—superstitions, but shall we hastily destroy them? Judged from the same angle the Christian rite of baptism is a relic of the past from which all real meaning has been rationalised away. To the Catholic, baptism is a sacrament; to a small proportion

of Protestants, baptism is a rite of paramount importance; but to the majority of free churchmen it is an "idol," a mere compliance with tradition and custom. Though to the Catholic a sacrament, baptism is to the average Protestant a symbol whose virtue has long since gone.

Let us address ourselves for a while to the problem involved in the foregoing paragraph by asking a question of practical importance. We think and speak symbolically. What then shall be our attitude to those of our fellow members of the "one holy Church of God" who invest with supreme value those symbols and signs—idols of wood, ancient writings, credal formulæ or sacred invocations—which seem to us antiquated, worthless, vain? Shall we belabour the "false gods" and set about us with iconoclastic zeal, or shall we allow to other children of God the "toys" which please them?

[CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE]

Reports.

All Soul's Belfast.—The Sunday School excursion to Ballygally on Saturday, June 29th, has been voted the best ever. Every minute of the day was thoroughly enjoyed by young and old. The weather was ideal; the accommodation, thanks to our friends at Larne, was all that could be desired; the food, thanks to the ladies who spent Friday evening cutting up, was most appetising to a hungry crowd; while all the excursion arrangements, thanks to Miss A. Montgomery's excellent organisation, were carried out without a hitch. Between an early lunch and a late tea, both in the schoolroom at Larne, about four most enjoyable hours were spent on the shore at Ballygally. Races, cricket, ball games and bathing were included in the programme. A tired but happy party reached Belfast about 9 p.m. While in Larne we were pleased to see the Rev. John and Mrs. Begg, and also the Rev. James Kennedy, who joined us for a short time.

—From The All Souls' July Calendar.

Downpatrick.—The First Presbyterian Non-Subscribing Sunday School's flower service on 30th June was felt by all present to be an encouragement of the love of the beautiful in nature and art and music. The church was nicely decorated with choice flowers by Miss Jordan and Miss Mabel Dickson, and the latter presided with efficiency at the organ. Rev. Edgar Lockett of Holywood, was the preacher. A solo was very sweetly rendered by Miss Dorcas Hughes. The hymns taken from the Sunday School Association Book, suitable to the occasion, were sung by the children, three of whom acted as collectors. The gifts of flowers and eggs were sent to the infirmary. The Boys' Brigade were heartily welcomed and thanked for their attendance.

—"The Down Recorder," 6/7/29.

Cairncastle Old Meeting House.—A satisfactory excursion took place on Tuesday, 25th June. A party of fifty-one persons including sixteen who did not belong to the Congregation, went to Ballycastle and Ballymena, spending some four hours in the former place and three in the latter. At Ballycastle, eight young people spent their time boating in the bay, whilst a fair proportion of the remainder of the company rambled on the cliffs. Five of the party visited the remnant of a Round Tower at Armoy, and a window in the remnant of a castle at Clough. The rest missed their way to the said window of the castle at Clough; but all found their way to the doors of an hotel at Ballymena.

The following is the reply received from the Private Secretary to His Majesty King George V. in response to the resolution passed at the Annual Meeting of the General Synod, expressing the loyal assurance and gratitude with which the members welcomed the happy tidings of His Majesty's return to health and strength.

WINDSOR CASTLE,
25th June, 1929.

Dear Sir,

I write to acknowledge your letter to Lord Stamfordham of June 20th, and, in reply, to inform you that the resolution passed at the Annual Meeting of the General Synod of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland has been laid before the King who asks you to be good enough to convey to the members, his sincere thanks for their kind and loyal sentiments.

Yours very truly,
A. H. L. HARDINGE.

The Rev. G. J. Slipper, Clerk,
The Non-subscribing Presbyterian
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